

## Ornamentation

Flute makers employ many techniques to add to the aesthetics of their flutes. Some of the more popular techniques are inlay, pyrography (wood burning) , beading and ornate carving. Many flutes have beautifully carved birds depicting animals or other symbols. In these cases the bird is usually referred to as a totem or fetish. Ornamentation is solely an aesthetic issue and if done appropriately has no affect on the sound of the flute. I usually prefer to use ornamentation sparingly, opting for simple, minimalistic curving shapes that allow the natural beauty of the wood to take center stage.

## Voicing

Just as ornamentation, finish and wood selection create beauty for your eyes, voicing and tuning create beauty for your ears. A flute's voice, in my opinion, is one of it's most important attributes. Tuning is very important as well, but a flute with a poor voice will still sound poor even when it is in tune. If a flute doesn't sound good, you might as well hang it on a wall. My flutes are meant to be played.

The easiest way for me to describe a flute's voice is to discuss three of it's main qualities: Volume (Soft — Loud), Timbre (Reedy/Thin — Rich/Full), and Breathiness (Pure/Clean — Breathy/Dirty). A quiet flute is a good choice for personal meditation. A louder flute works well for playing without amplification or with other instruments. A reedy sound can lend a Middle Eastern feel, while a rich full sound conjures up thoughts of the canyon lands. A clean pure tone is bell-like, but a breathy tone can add layers of emotion and expression. A good player can manipulate the voice of a flute with breath control and other techniques to achieve many of these affects from a single flute. The voice that is best for you will depend on your preferences and how you intend to use your flute. My flutes have a variety of voices.

## Tuning

The early Native American Flutes were tuned using the proportions of the intended player. It went something like the following. The length of the flute is the length of the arm, finger holes start a hand width from the foot and are spaced a knuckle apart with another hand width between the top finger hole and the TSH. There was no notion of key

or scale, only that the flute was in tune to the player. This is sometimes referred to as grandfather tuning. Many flutes are still tuned this way today.

When settlers arrived from Europe, they brought with them the western musical system. This introduced the concepts of key and scale to flute tuning and caused many to shift from tuning to a specific player to tuning to a specific reference frequency. This new method is called concert tuning and allowed flutes to be played with other instruments. The frequency of the first A above middle C on the piano is used. Today, this is widely accepted as 440 Hz. at 72° F, but can vary based on local tradition and type of music. There is even interest in using 432 Hz. to harmonize with Earth's frequency.

Like many musical instruments, the pitch produced by a flute is affected by environmental conditions. Temperature, humidity and altitude can raise or lower the pitch. Some instruments have ways of compensating for this, but Native American Style Flutes typically do not. Unless otherwise requested, I tune my flutes using the 440 Hz. standard.

## Key

Native American Style Flutes are made in a variety of keys from ultra low, which is way down near the lowest notes on a piano, to ultra high, which is way up near the highest notes. The majority of flutes are keyed to the notes just above middle C, with the most commonly made keys being F# and G. Interestingly enough, flutes in these keys are similar in size to many grandfather tuned flutes. The reason for this is the relationship between a flute's size and it's key. These particular keys result in flutes that are naturally proportioned to the average person. Each person has a playable range of flute keys, outside of which the flute is either too big or too small for the finger holes to be reached comfortably. If you will be playing with other musicians, you should think about building a collection of flutes in different keys. I make flutes in many keys, the majority of which are in the playable range of the average person.

## Scale

Typically, Native American Style Flutes are made with 5 or 6 finger holes that are tuned to play a Minor Pentatonic Scale. I usually make 6 holed flutes. This scale is the essence of the hauntingly beautiful music made with these flutes. Any style music can be played, though, as all the notes of the diatonic scale (think piano) can be fingered. Other scales can be used as well.

The most interesting scale I have used is the Jewish Ahava Raba Mode. This resulted in an unusual 7 hole flute. Think somewhere between a snake charmer and “if I were a rich man Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle dum” and you'll know what it sounds like.

## Tonal Range

The tonal range of the Native American Style Flute is limited when compared with other flutes. Usually only a few notes more than an octave will sound. This is a simple fact of the physics of the flute. This does not diminish it's importance or usefulness as a musical instrument. There are a surprising number of melodies that fit into this range. My flutes typically play at least two whole steps into the second octave. I strive for three whole steps. For a flute in the key of G, this is either the A above the octave G or the B. This is between 15 and 17 keys on the piano (including both black and white keys).

## Availability

My flutes have a permanent home at my website online. I also vend at several Festivals and Craft Shows each year. Please visit <http://www.jimsflutes.com> or contact me for further information.

## Custom Orders

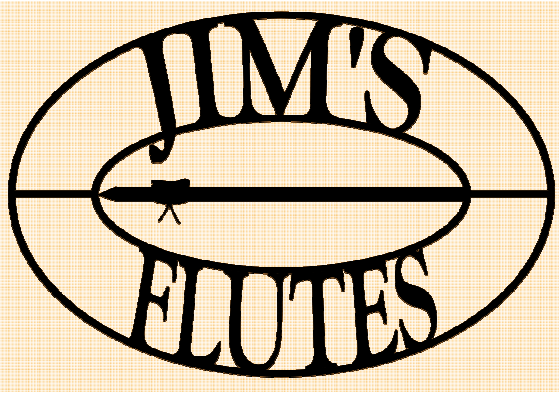
While I try to have a variety of flutes available, there will be times when that special flute is just not among them. Contact me and I will work with you to create a flute that fits your personal needs.

## Legalities

Native American Flutes are part of the Native American culture and as such are protected under the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 and the Indian Arts and Crafts Enforcement act of 2000. The Code of Federal Regulations [CITE:25CFR309.9] states “A non-Indian can make and sell products in the style of Indian art or craft products only if the non-Indian or other seller does not falsely suggest to consumers that the products have been made by an Indian. “

I am not an “Indian” and do not represent my flutes as being “Indian” made. I have great respect for the Native culture and use the word “Style” to distinguish my flutes from the Native American Flutes made by Native flute makers.

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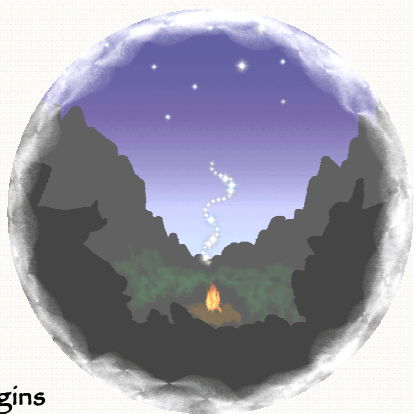
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*“The flute is an energy conduit between one’s soul and the world” — Jim Verrelli*



## Origins

A cool wind blows through an unknown valley. Firelight strains upward in dancing finger-like tendrils towards a boundless night sky. The underbrush rustles and the night bird calls. From the distance, a pure tone emanates, carried on the wind. An ethereal voice speaking melodiously above the symphony of the night— not in discord, but in harmony. It is not shunned, but is welcomed and embraced and becomes one with the night. It is the soul of the first flute player touching the world and changing it forever...

We really don't know exactly where or when the first flute was created and played, but I would like to think it happened something like what I have depicted here. We do know that it occurred thousands and thousands of years ago.

From ancient times to the present, music has played a central role in our cultures. It is an inseparable part of our humanity. Mankind's first musical instrument was our own voice, followed shortly afterward by the flute. I feel that the flute is the instrument that most closely approximates and extends the human voice. Nearly every culture has produced their own flute-like instruments and many have extensive mythologies to describe their origins. More often than not, these attribute them as gifts from the Creator. This is my belief as well.

Today, there are hundreds of types of flutes in the world. I make but a small number of these and most of the flutes I make are in the Native American Style. The hauntingly

beautiful sound of this style flute has reached deep down inside me and captured my heart. Now I am compelled to make them.

## My Journey

I was born and raised in North Western Pennsylvania. I attended Catholic grade school and high school. My interest in music began in grade school with piano lessons. I eventually taught myself to play many other instruments and took some guitar classes in college. I attended college in Oneonta, NY where I met my wife Kathy. After college, we spent a few years in the Binghamton, NY area, but eventually moved back to Oneonta where we currently reside with our 3 children.

I've always loved the sound of Native American Style Flutes. In March of 2006, I finally purchased one. It was a small flute made out of PVC pipe, but it was enough to pique my interest for more. This was the origin of my flute journey. I decided to apply my woodworking skills and make my own wooden flutes. After a little bit of online research, mostly at the yahoo group Native Flute Woodworking, I made my first flute. It turned out well, so I kept making them. By the end of 2008, I had made more than a hundred.

With each new batch of flutes I build upon the successes of the previous and learn from my failures, ever striving to create that elusive “perfect flute”. I'm not even sure that there is one perfect flute, but it's fleeting vision is what drives my journey. I feel honored to be able to share this wonderful instrument with others and to help keep it alive. The journey continues...

## Philosophy

My philosophy is simple. Produce quality flutes for reasonable prices. At the same time, I hope to return thanks to the Creator and the flute community through education and increasing interest in our beloved flutes.

## Passion

If you have been reading along, you know that making flutes is a passion for me. It allows me to meld together my interests in woodworking and music and provides an outlet for my creative expression both in making and playing these flutes. I cannot even begin to convey the feeling I had when I heard the first sounds sing from that first flute I made. I started with a piece of oak and after careful measurement and carving it came to life in my hands.

## Commitment

I am proud of and stand behind my work. I am committed to creating flutes that will provide years of enjoyment. My flutes are warranted for the life of the flute maker (that's me). If you ever have a problem, let me know.

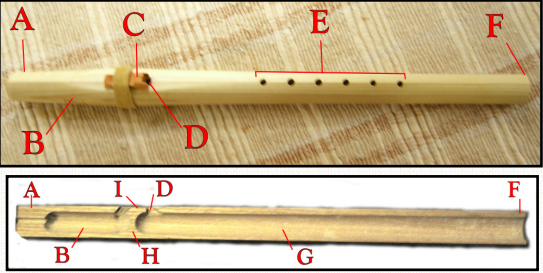
## Awards

Some of the awards I have been fortunate enough to receive:

- October, 2007 Wightmans Specialty Woods Woodworking Competition, 1st Place Miscellaneous Category for a beautiful Curly Cherry Flute.
- August, 2008 Cortland Arts and Wine Festival, 1st Place in the Artisan Crafts Category
- October, 2008 Wightmans Specialty Woods Woodworking Competition, First Place Miscellaneous Category for a uniquely designed Curly Cherry drone flute.
- March , 2012 Northeaster Woodworker's Showcase, 3rd Place in Musical Instruments for a large 1 ½" Maple flute
- April, 2016 Northeastern Woodworker's Showcase, 1st Place Musical Instruments (non-stringed) for a beautifully figured ¾" Maple flute

## Flute Anatomy

To prepare you for the topics in the remainder of this brochure, a quick walk through of the various parts of the Native American Style Flute is in order.



- A – Head or Mouthpiece
- B – Slow Air Chamber (SAC)
- C – Bird/Block/Totem/Fetish
- D – True Sound Hole (TSH)
- E – Finger Holes
- F – Foot or End
- G – Main Bore
- H – Plug
- I – Flue

When you breath air into the Mouthpiece (A), your breath enters the Slow Air Chamber (B). It is then forced up under the Bird (C) and through a thin channel called the Flue (I). The thin air stream then passes over the cutting edge of the True

Sound Hole (D) creating the sound.

## Selecting a Flute

Finding a flute that speaks to you is very personal. Some say that you don't find a flute, it finds you. If that is indeed the case, then there are still some things you can do to help your flute find you. First, figure out what appeals to you and how you intend to use your flute. Then make sure you make yourself available to those types of flutes.

There are many aspects of a flute to consider, but ultimately they all reduce down to aesthetics and sound quality— the look of the flute and what it sounds like. The next few sections cover the various choices available to you with these two thoughts in mind.

## Wood

Wood plays a large role in the aesthetics of a flute. It also contributes to it's sound. In general, softwoods have a mellow sound while hardwoods have a brighter tone. I say in general as there are many other factors, such as wall thickness, TSH configuration, finger hole size and finish, that can affect a flute's sound. It is entirely possible to have a mellow sounding flute made from a hardwood and a bright sounding flute made from a softwood. My advice is to consider wood an aesthetic choice and allow the flute to speak it's tone.

When I first started making flutes, I used cedar. Unfortunately, I developed a sensitivity to the cedar dust, so now I use mostly hardwoods. I have used many species native to NY State. Of those, my favorite is Curly Cherry. I have also used more exotic woods such as Purpleheart, Zebra-wood, Paduk and Lace/Leopard Wood.

## Finish

As with wood, a flute's finish contributes to both it's aesthetics and it's sound. Some finishes, such as thick polyurethane, actually contribute more to a flute's sound than the underlying wood. While they provide excellent protection and low maintenance, they also mask the characteristics of the wood. Personally, I prefer to use a natural Bees-wax/Mineral Oil finish on my flutes. Regular maintenance is required, but it is a small price to pay for experiencing the true sound and feel of the wood.